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ABSTRACT

The business education teacher must thoroughly understand why and what he is doing in career education. A career education program can be viewed as consisting of five categories from which the teacher is to form a basic career education philosophy. (1) To develop in the student self-awareness and a positive attitude toward self, school, and work. It includes ways in which a business teacher can help the student perceive a clear picture of his capabilities and potential. (2) By the end of his formal education a student should have developed an occupational awareness of the kinds and numbers of jobs available in our society. (3) The general goal of occupational exploration is to help students examine their needs and interests in the light of career opportunities. (4) The major role of the business education teacher is preparing the student for immediate job entry or post-secondary technical training following high school graduation. (5) Business educators should develop a placement and followup program. The placement function has a major contribution in helping the pupil toward his optimum development. After a student has left school, followup procedures can provide information on how the school could have served him better. Although these categories are developmental, each will continue throughout an individual's lifetime. (BP)

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THE ROLE OF THE BUSINESS EDUCATION TEACHER IN CAREER EDUCATION

A definition of the role of "the" business education teacher is really impossible because "the" business education teacher is an abstraction. The role of a specific business education teacher, employed to teach specific business education subjects in a specific school district, could be more readily defined--still not an easy task. Keep in mind, therefore, that much of what will be said must be tempered by several variables present in any given school setting. Three of the variables are illustrated by the following questions.

1. What is currently being done for career education (K-14) in your school district?
2. What is the socio-economic status and general attitude toward education of the parents in your school district?
3. What is the status of the home based or community-wide career education process?

Any one of these variables, or others not mentioned, could limit your role to being only a cog in a hypothetical career education wheel. Conversely, the variables may demand that your activities, at least for a time, represent the entire wheel. Your role may be one of determining where you fit into the bigger career education picture, or you may have to do what you can to implement career education alone while actively serving as a catalyst for getting career education accepted.

It can justifiably be argued that what a business education teacher does in isolation is not and cannot be defined as career education. To completely fulfill the intent of career education, every teacher at every level--K-adult--must conscientiously incorporate career education concepts into their courses. This is not to say, however, that if every teacher is not currently participating, that an individual teacher should not incorporate career concepts whenever he or she can. The time when the collective contributions of a school's

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staff can be classified as career education is academic. For the purposes of this presentation all attempts a teacher makes to incorporate career education concepts into his or her teaching activities will be termed career education. These attempts could also be referred to as career development activities, self-awareness activities, attempts to humanize education, or simply a curricular emphasis. Isolated activities cannot provide the renewed curricular emphasis or sense of purpose of education as a whole that a full-blown career education program can. A true career education program provides a basis for unifying all aspects of education--isolated career education activities by a business education teacher cannot. In spite of the local situation, students must be served as realistically and effectively as possible.

A business education teacher will automatically be accomplishing many of the components of career education. If the teacher is not well grounded in the career education concept, however, these activities may not provide the systematic emphasis a career education program would. A teacher must thoroughly understand why he is doing what he is doing in career education. Although the following suggestions are very specific, you are encouraged to form a philosophic basis for their implementation. Remember, there are critics of the career education concept. Unless you understand the "why" in what you are doing, career education may not withstand the test of time.

A career education program can be viewed as consisting of five interlocking elements or pieces--much like a jigsaw puzzle. The remainder of this presentation will deal individually with each of these five interlocking pieces.

1. The development of self-awareness and positive attitude toward self, school, and work.
2. The development of occupational awareness.
3. The development of occupational exploratory experiences.
4. The provision of job preparation programs.
5. The development of a placement and follow-up program.

These five categories will be discussed in a developmental sequence. A business teacher must be sensitive to the current development of his students and proceed accordingly. His primary role in career education then, depends upon what has taken place prior to the time

"his" students have reached him. What the business educator has must be articulated with what a student has been exposed to since birth. Additionally, the entire school district's students must be his concern--not only those who end up in the classes he has been assigned to teach. The background of the students in the business educator's classroom might suggest what action will have to be taken at all levels.

Although these categories are developmental, each will continue throughout an individual's lifetime.

I will discuss each of the five categories mentioned previously individually and propose some ideas that a business educator might use to implement career education concepts or fulfill his role in career education.

1. **Development of self-awareness and positive attitudes toward self, school, and work.**

This category includes ways in which a business teacher can help students get a clear picture of their capabilities and potential--to understand the role of work in our society and how what they are doing in school (all of what takes place) complements that picture. This process should have begun before a student even reaches school; in fact, this is most easily accomplished at an early age. Your role depends upon the extent to which a student understands his potential, role of work, and the relevance of his school activities. A 10th-grade business education teacher may be responsible for most of this if his district is one in which all education is treated as an end in itself.

More specifically, a business education teacher can do these things:

a. Be on the alert for opportunities to compliment students for work well done, thus helping them recognize their strengths and develop self-confidence. (Career development theorists have conducted studies which indicate that career choice is directly related to self-concept.)

b. When necessary to criticize, do so in a constructive manner. Point out that finding out what they cannot do well is just as important as is to find out what they can do well. Thus,

rather than feeling crushed because of inability to do a task well after several honest attempts, they should accept it as a learning experience regarding their personal limitations and proceed to explore and try out other activities until they have developed a repertoire of skills about which they can "feel good." Helping students find a few things in which they can excel does wonders in developing positive attitudes toward themselves, school in general, and eventual work roles.

c. Since much of our self-concept is derived from our interaction with others, be on the alert to compliment students for demonstrating human relations skills. In simulated work situations, take advantage of opportunities, as they arise, to discuss the interdependence of workers and the need for cooperation among workers, and between employees and employers. Discuss the purpose and importance of each job and how each worker needs recognition as having personal worth.

d. Use the vocational student group to provide expanded opportunities for students to get a clear picture of, and to practice, human relations skills. The student group's activities provide students an opportunity to experience a sense of belonging and self-esteem--to become immersed in occupational, social, and civic activities.

2. Development of occupational awareness.

By the time he terminates his formal education, a student should have an awareness of the kinds and numbers of jobs available in our society. He should further understand that work can be and should be possible, meaningful, and satisfying to him as an individual. Students begin in the process of occupational awareness to match their interests, aptitudes, and abilities to the careers they become aware of. Through occupational awareness school activities gain new meaning--rather than meaningless activity leading to something about which they know nothing. Students must be taught to see the relationships between their current school activities and some identifiable next step. It is our responsibility to ensure that they see the relationship between what they are doing in school and what they would be expected to do in the business world.

Some of the things a business teacher can do to develop occupational awareness includes the following:

a. During the first week of orientation and introduction to each business education course, be certain to relate what is to be learned to real life and/or vocational situations. Throughout each course continue to relate what is being learned to its application outside of school. Encourage academic and elementary teachers to stress to their classes the application of what is being or will be taught to the business and office occupations cluster. Teachers in other disciplines might not fully realize just how important the subject matter they cover is to a successful career in the area for which we have primary responsibility--they may not even ponder it without our continuous encouragement that they do so. Many, if not most of these teachers, will have little feel for business and office occupations. This activity will involve a continuous informal (or possibly formal) in-service effort on the part of the business education instructor.

b. Continuously be on the alert for opportunities to acquaint students with job descriptions of occupations which utilize the particular skills or competencies you are teaching. As an example, copy materials for typing drill may well include brief descriptions of a variety of business and office occupations. Practice material for shorthand might effectively be used in the same way.
Teachers from kindergarten through grade 12 should be encouraged to employ job description materials wherever possible. It may well be that these teachers have never considered the possibility or merit of this.

c. Stress <u>and</u> encourage others to stress the importance and contribution of jobs in business and office occupations and discuss their interrelatedness. Stress <u>all</u> jobs within the business and office cluster. While refraining from emphasis on job hierarchy, stress what the career ladder within the cluster has to offer. To do this a teacher must be fully aware of what the business and office cluster encompasses.

d. Use "outside experts" from the community to acquaint students with the need for the skills you are teaching in business education and with the nature of the work involved in these occupations. Suggest or recommend business people you know would do a good job for use by teachers in the lower grades. These teachers may never have realized the importance of involving "outside experts."

e. In discussing business and office occupations, point out that different people like different kinds of work, and that each is entitled to his or her choice of available opportunities. Ensure that your students understand the personal, social, and economic significance of each business occupation. Explain the trade-off between responsibility, authority, and economic remuneration. It should be pointed out that a computer operator is in no way superior to a keypunch operator and a legal secretary is not superior to someone who does not have an aptitude for shorthand. Disadvantages should be stressed along with advantages. Students must be encouraged to look beyond starting salary and to realize what the future potential of an entry level job is.

f. Keep up to date on employment trends. Share this information with other teachers as well as your students to avoid an oversupply of trained workers for some jobs and a shortage for others. Avoid making false assumptions regarding employment trends. Periodic work experience for teachers can provide a tremendous insight into the current employment situation.

3. Development of Occupational Exploratory Experiences.

The general goal of occupational exploration is to help all students examine themselves, look at the broad range of career opportunities ahead of them, and consider their needs and interests in light of those opportunities. Many, if not most, career decisions are based upon inadequate or inaccurate information. Business education teachers, with their firsthand knowledge of the business world and close working relationship with business and industry, can play a key role in career exploration for all students. The exploration of business careers should be guided by business education teachers. A specific

teacher's role is dependent upon the total career education program being implemented in his school district.

Career exploration activities typically begin at the junior high or middle school level--the level or time in the developmental process of youth when curiosity about work is at a peak. This is commonly the first level at which a business education subject matter specialist is employed. Since a business education teacher might be employed, the role of the business teacher can be more precisely defined in the area of career exploration than in self-awareness or career awareness. Their role at the developmental levels previously reviewed is ongoing and in many cases quite comprehensive.

Some things a business education teacher can do to fulfill his or her role in career exploration include:

a. Push for the provision of a basic course in "Exploring Careers in the World of Business" that gives all students the opportunity to explore careers in the world of business before it is time to enroll in subject matter courses.

b. Develop short-term opportunities for students to observe and actually test their interests and aptitudes in business and office occupations in simulated or actual work situations. Special day-at-the-job programs or simulated hands-on courses are needed. These programs require school-community cooperation. Retired persons are frequently interested and available to assist in exploratory work projects.

c. Discuss case histories of personal career development experiences of real people in your field. Your experience, those of your students' brothers and sisters, or anyone else currently in the field would be appropriate. Incorporate more career information into all classes and subjects.

d. Ensure that programs with an instructional base are augmented by career counseling, job information centers, and other special services in the area of guidance and counseling. This will demand that you work closely with guidance counselors to provide them with accurate information about business and office careers.

e. Learn as much as you can about career development theory--what it is, what it means in terms of working with students, and how it can be put into practice.

Avoid using exploratory experiences as simply a recruiting forum for the career preparation courses available in your school. Exploratory experiences in business education should encompass the full range of careers in the cluster. Admit to your students that their school cannot provide career preparation programs for some careers rather than counseling students into courses that may not coincide with their career intentions just to generate additional enrollment.

Ensure that a business educator employed to teach at the junior high or middle school level is one who can work effectively with students at this level. A teacher who demands regimentation might "turn students off" to a business career at a critical point in their life. One teacher, at this stage of a student's development, can influence the image that student has of the entire business cluster.

4. Provision of career preparation programs.

The major or primary role of the typical business education teacher falls within the realm of career preparation. Career preparation begins at the point a student declares his career objective. Career preparation in the developmental process is when the student begins to earnestly prepare for a specific job cluster. The goal is preparation for immediate job entry or post-secondary technical training upon high school graduation.

Some of the things an individual business educator can do to fulfill his role in career preparation include:

a. Continue to arm middle school, junior high school, and high school counselors and teachers with information about the business education career preparation programs and about the occupations in which students could use the skills acquired in these programs.

b. Endeavor to strengthen and expand the business education program to provide continued exploratory experiences and serious preparation for employment and/or further training in a wide

variety of business occupations. Provide preparation programs for accounting, data processing, or management careers.

c. Expand school-community cooperation in order to provide additional cooperative training for more students who can profit by it.

d. Use input from advisory committees, the employment service, research studies, and other professional reports as a basis for revising career preparation curriculum to better meet the needs of students and the employing community. Keep abreast of ongoing curriculum or task analysis projects such as NOBELS and incorporate their findings wherever appropriate.

e. Encourage your students to maintain the attitude that they are preparing for a cluster of business occupations rather than a specific job. They should be encouraged to keep several options open regarding their "next step" upon leaving school. Neither continuing education nor immediate employment should be ignored as realistic alternatives.

f. Students must be shown the importance of human relations skills. Encourage students to develop human relations skills and marketable vocational skills to help get, hold, and advance on a job. One excellent way to accomplish these tasks is through the vocational student organization.

g. Avoid the tendancy to "lock students into" the business or office education sequence. You may even counsel a student out of the business career preparation program. While departmental competition is healthy, welfare of students must receive first priority.

h. Ensure that the students are aware of employer expectations--and not just one employer's expectations. Students should have an opportunity to observe the varying expectations of business people. This is yet another situation where the vocational student organization can serve as an excellent vehicle for ensuring that students are provided this opportunity.

i. The instructor's professional development should include periodic on-the-job work experience. Make an effort to meet the requirements for vocational business and office certification

in your state even though it may not be required. Active participation in professional business education associations can help the career preparation program become even stronger.

j. Ensure that the business education department as a whole casts a favorable impression in the eyes of the students.

k. It is your obligation to know what the vocational, technical, and adult education schools expect your graduates to know in order to receive advanced placement and/or standing in their schools. Articulation of programs is important K-adult--especially when the same discipline is an integral portion of several levels of preparation.

5. Development of a placement and follow-up program.

Placement of students in jobs has received additional acceptance and recognition as a responsibility of schools as a result of the career education movement. The job placement function has a major contribution to make to the total career education objective--helping the pupil toward his optimum development. Without adequate placement services students may take whatever job they can secure--often despite a prior career choice and opportunity to apply skills and knowledge obtained in career preparation.

After a student has left school, either as a dropout or a graduate, follow-up procedures can provide information on how the school could have served him better. Follow-ups can provide a realistic picture of what lies ahead for present students, can help former students reappraise their career plans, can aid in appraisal of the school's program, and can provide ideas for improving the program.

Some specific suggestions on ways to fulfill your role in this category include:

a. Expand your contacts with community employers as possible sources of employment for your exiting students. This should be viewed as a responsibility of <u>all</u> business educators regardless of whether or not they teach a course typically taken just before the student enters the labor market. Cooperative method teachers have an excellent opportunity to develop these contacts.

b. Expansion of your contacts with school counselors (and employment counselors if available) to improve two-way communications regarding qualified applicants and job openings.
c. Discuss, study, and roleplay employment procedures such as: discovering job openings, securing appointments for interviews by phone and/or letter, completing resumes, completing applications, and selling oneself in an interview.
d. Expand your contacts with admission counselors in post-secondary private and public vocational and technical schools to improve two-way communications regarding applicants and openings in various programs.
e. Conduct regular follow-up studies to evaluate your program.

Summary

Maintain a positive attitude toward the entire career education movement. Admittedly, implementation of its concepts will require additional effort on the part of all teachers. Many will undoubtedly oppose any attempt to incorporate its concepts for that reason alone--seeking any and every reason to build a philosophical case against it.

Constantly be on the lookout for ways to provide in-service activities for elementary school teachers and other non-business education staff concerning the business and office education cluster. Don't wait for an elementary teacher to come to you--take a look at what they are doing and discuss ways in which they might serve the interests of career education in general and business and office occupations in particular.

Constantly be on the lookout for "teachable moments" when you are in the classroom. While it may now seem difficult to picture a situation in which you might implement the foregoing suggestions, opportunities will frequently present themselves during your regular classroom activities.

Your attitude toward your job is important to career education, too. If you are unhappy as a business education teacher, it is likely that you will convey an impression that work is drudgery and should be avoided. If you see being a teacher as a means to an end rather than

an end in itself, perhaps you should recyle yourself to the exploration or career preparation stage. If you cannot cope with or work effectively with that level of students with which you are assigned, perhaps you should seek another setting.

Career education is gaining stature and recognition nationally. Ultimately, however, the impact career education has locally will depend upon the collective you. Success of the concept depends upon the dedication of every educator.